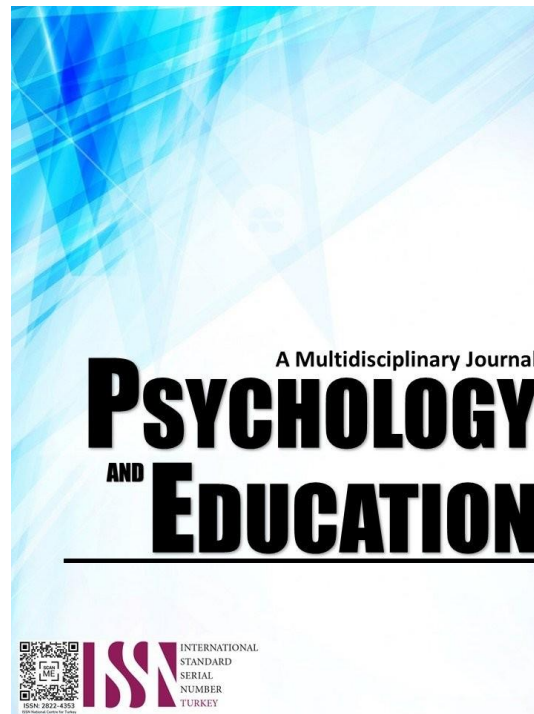


LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NURSES ON NURSING SHORTAGE: BASIS IN STRENGTHENING NURSES' PROTECTION ADVOCACIES AND EDUCATION



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Lived Experiences of Nurses on Nursing Shortage: Basis in Strengthening Nurses' Protection Advocacies and Education

Joel John A. Dela Merced*, Joseph E. De Luna, Juliana Gabrielle O. Garcia, Czarina Garrido
 Marc Edison O. Malana, Shaira Ann C. Manguerra, Jerimae E. Rabago, Katryz Zamea G. Usman,
 Ruby D. Vargas, James Darren H. Villalva, Elsie V. Villanueva

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

The onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic marked a significant decrease of nurses in the country. The country lacks about 106,000 nurses, both in public and private hospitals, based on the reports of the Department of Health as of 2022. In effect, nurses who remained were experiencing problems in delivering essential care, support, and comfort to their patients. This research was set forth to investigate the phenomenon concerning the lived experiences of nurses on the nursing shortage and to build a foundation for the nurses' protection advocacies and education. The researchers used a hermeneutical phenomenological approach and gathered data using an exploratory questionnaire and in-depth interviews with the participants. This study is composed of three (3) participants for the pilot testing and eleven (11) samples for the study who were selected purposely. The data underwent thorough thematic and data analyses. Eventually, the analyzed data revealed that the nurses are facing overwhelming and heavy workloads due to a shortage in manpower and facing life-threatening situations in the performance of their duty. However, it was also disclosed that technologies and mutualism in the workplace are of big help to them. In conclusion, fulfilling protection advocacies and education must be strengthened among nurses to improve the quality of life they deserve.

Keywords: *advocacies, basis, education, experiences, lived, nurses, nursing, protection, shortage, strengthening*

Introduction

Nurses frequently face challenging situations, considering that they are the ones who are accountable for maintaining and ensuring that the highest quality of care is delivered to patients, as well as fulfilling the obligations and responsibilities that the nurses carry. Furthermore, in accordance with the World Health Statistics Report, the United States has 3.9 million nurses and midwives, while on the other hand, the world has approximately 29 million medical professionals. Despite having these tons of nurses and other healthcare providers, the world is still facing a nursing shortage that leads to bad experiences for nurses. This study supports the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 275,000 nurses are needed from 2020 to 2030. The growth of employment opportunities for nurses will be greater than for any other profession. Along these lines, a recent study also by (Hamlin, 2022) stated that healthcare systems worldwide are facing a shortage of a nursing workforce. Even with the high number of nursing graduates that resulted over the past few years, it still remains a widespread problem, which piques the interest of the researchers. This study also coincides with the statistics from the Department of Health for 2022, which mentioned that the Philippines has a shortage of around 106,000 nurses, both in public and private facilities and hospitals.

The scarcity of nurses has a significant impact on the nurses' experience with patients receiving care and the system of health care. As COVID-19 started last 2019, many hospitals in different countries especially the Philippines suffered more because of nursing shortages. While facing this pandemic many people complained in the hospitals and other government agencies because hospitals' lack of nurses that leads to different problems. In addition to that, a high patient-nurse ratio was also felt. Absurdly, even though this nation is the top exporter of nurses in the world, the healthcare system is still struggling because of job satisfaction, low pay, a heavy workload, and a toxic work environment. As a result of nursing shortages, (Haddad et al., 2022), this led to errors, higher morbidity, and higher mortality rates. Furthermore, this also results in stressful conditions and puts pressure on the remaining nurses working in the area, which would lead to employment exhaustion and a lower retention rate for skilled nurses. As many nursing students also encountered difficulties to cope with the complexity of the nursing shortage; the researchers would like to address and mitigate the effects of the nursing shortage in terms of client care within the healthcare institutions.

The researchers have chosen the study entitled "Lived Experiences of Nurses on Nursing Shortage: Basis in Strengthening Nurses' Protection Advocacies and Education" to determine how the shortage of nurses

affects the healthcare system through the lens of the participants' lived experiences and to propose measures that reduce the effect of the nursing shortage. The researchers came to the conclusion that the lived experiences of nurses have affected the scarcity of nurses in healthcare facilities; identified how it affects patients in terms of providing quality care especially during pandemic; discovered significant differences in the effects of the nursing shortage in the healthcare environment this includes on how they were able to cope up with the toxicity in their area as they lack manpower ; and assessed the impact of the nursing shortage on client care when interviewed in accordance with the hospital. Finally, various techniques have lessened the impact of a nursing shortage in healthcare facilities, such as advanced technologies that were provided by the hospital. Given the fact that they have received compensation pay during pandemic and before pandemic as they work overtime, nurses still demand a high salary as they believe that is it their utmost right to received a pay because of their hard work, this is also the solution that they see fit for them to not work in other country.

The findings of this study would benefit the Hospital Administration, Nursing Services, HR Department, Nursing Research (Training and Education), Nurses, Student Nurses, and Future Researchers. For the Hospital Administration, applies the recommended approach that would derive from the results of this study in decreasing the impact of this scarcity in the healthcare environment. For nursing services, to offer empirical evidence that supports a nursing practice that would aid us in definitive patient care. For Human Resources Department, they would be able to provide security to employees; fair and manage to help their nurses to provide evidence-based practice within their institution. For nursing research, training, and education, this would develop nurses that possess information literacy abilities and use more information to generate their own findings efficiently; for nurses, evidence-based practice is the key. For nurses, feel more confident about receiving social support from others, advance their profession, and provide improved patient care. For the student nurses, considering that this study would act as a guide for them to improve their learning and preparation for the challenges of the workforce shortage and for their career decisions. For future researchers to use this study, which provides them with essential data that would serve as their reference and guide for conducting a new study with a deeper and wider scope given the connections between the variables used.

Research Questions

This study is primarily concerned with how nursing shortages affect nurses' experiences. To obtain all the essential data, information, and knowledge, the study sought to answer the crucial questions as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of senior nurses in the current nursing shortage in terms: Pre-pandemic, pandemic, and new normal?
- 2 How do senior nurses handle the nursing shortage?
3. What are the observations of senior nurses on the political, economic, and social solutions to the nursing shortage?
- 4 What are the lived experiences of senior nurses regarding the current technological and environmental healthcare status of the shortage?
- 5 Based on the themes, what proposed methods will reduce the effects of the nursing shortage?

Methodology

This chapter describes the research techniques that was used by the researcher when they carry out the study, including the research design, study population, development of the research instrument and opinion establishing its validity and reliability, data collection techniques, and the appropriate treatment of data.

Research Design

This study focused on the phenomenological research approach, which, according to Delve (2022), pertains to a qualitative research approach that tries to comprehend and characterize a phenomenon's universal essence. The approach investigates the everyday experiences of human beings while suspending the researchers' preconceived assumptions about the phenomenon. Thus, the researchers would pursue the lived experiences (phenomenological study) that are open to any data that were gathered during the data gathering. Since the variables of the proposed study were investigating the nurses experience to a certain phenomenon referred to as the nursing shortage, this type of qualitative research design has been chosen.

In-depth interview approaches were used that established experiences, attitudes, and perspectives

about the nurses' lived experiences prior to the nursing shortage that was aggravating. Along these lines, in a phenomenological investigation, the focus is on how people saw a phenomenon and what they actually went through; with this, it explains how the researchers endeavored to understand the phenomenon, how an individual nurse experiences the shortage of nurses, and how this influences the enactment of current roles through hermeneutic phenomenology.

Unlike quantitative research, a qualitative research approach requires on field experience as it focuses on certain observations to be interpreted directly. According to Schoonenboom (Schoonenboom, 2023), qualitative data have a more consistency or aspect to the respondent's data as opposed to quantitative data which shows patterns and data that were related to. This is because qualitative research methods are often concerned with garnering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or are focused on meaning (and heterogeneities in meaning)—which are often centered on the how and why of a particular issue, process, situation, subculture, scene, or set of social interactions. In-depth interview work is more inductive and emergent in its process and does not rely on hypothesis testing and generalizations in a number of interests.

Research Locale

The researchers conducted a study in a tertiary hospital, one of the private hospitals in Quezon City, where this facility was founded on October 7, 2009, under Health Global International Inc. (HGI). This medical center was recently awarded Level 3 accreditation by the Department of Health; this award acknowledges the hospital's outstanding training programs for doctors, rehabilitation facilities, and dialysis units. This is located near SM Fairview, which is accessible to areas such as San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan, Caloocan, Valenzuela, and San Mateo, Rizal. This hospital and medical center, which has 148 beds in a 7-story building, aims to accommodate more Filipinos and offer them high-quality services utilizing modern and sophisticated technology and equipment. Along these lines, the reason why the researchers have chosen this hospital is because the hospital is experiencing a shortage of nurses. Furthermore, this is also accessible to the researchers since it correlates with their study.

Research Ethics

The confidentiality and anonymity of all the participants, that was selected through non-probability

sampling, particularly the senior nurses in one of the private hospitals in Quezon City under Health Global International Inc. (HGI), was maintained throughout the study to ensure the safety of their information. All qualified participants were treated equally during the online interview. The integrity of the study was secured as no fabrication of data occurred, plagiarism was avoided as much as possible, and proper certification was done. In order for the participants to know what to expect during the aforementioned interview, a brief consultation was conducted and proposed to the research locale's chief nurse first and later on the chief nurse discussed it to the participants who met the criteria for the study. Hence, to ensure that they are informed of the steps that was followed before and after the interview process. The researchers made sure that non-maleficence would be strictly observed and that any other sensitive information would only be used for the study since the intended purpose of the interview was just to gather the information that was needed.

In addition, the school's research ethics review board provided the researcher with ethical clearance before the study started, assuring that participant's rights would be respected or protected. Hence, as a precaution, the researchers had undergone a strict review and counseling of the questionnaires through professional panelists and research questionnaire validators to ensure the safety of the participants and their information, as the research's purpose was never to harm the participants. Since this study involved human participants, it was noted that the informed consent approach addressed ethical issues. The researcher sent letters of request, properly signed and endorsing the researcher's advice to conduct the study, to the intended hospital after the school research ethics review board assessed the research and issued the ethical clearance.

Following approval of the request, the researcher approached the chief nurse of the chosen hospitals to request permission to give questionnaires to the participants. After obtaining the approval of the administration from the hospital, the researcher's left a hardcopy of questionnaires, a requirement material for the participants- for the inclusion criteria of the researchers, as well as the letter to participants for them to review what the study is all about, and also the informed consent form – for them to signed if they would like to participate in the study. Those who have participated have reached the researchers through phone number and email that were written in the requirement material and ICF that were signed as they have voluntarily participated in the study. The

researchers reached the participants through the chief nurse. The researchers had collected the hardcopy letters and ICF from the chief nurse and contacted the participants who were willing to take part in the interview. Afterwards, the researchers conducted all the interviews online using a platform such as Zoom, Google Meet, Messenger, and a phone call, this is to whatever is convenient for the participants in order to avoid environmental hazards and protect the safety of both the participants and the researchers.

Prior to the participation of the participants in the study, the researcher had given them full disclosure of all material facts pertaining to the research in the form of a written document and fully described its contents to them. To safeguard the participants' identities, all the data from the interview was coded. All files and data were securely stored by the researcher in a secured flash drive. The data was discarded after it had been completely processed and understood. The data collected from the pilot project were preserved and recorded for the study's collection in order to protect the participants' confidentiality and the researcher's ethical integrity.

For further, the information that was gathered during the interview was translated for transcription, which the researchers carefully reviewed and evaluated. The researchers were able to draw conclusions and formed a themes from their findings after analyzing and interpreting the data that was collected on the nurses' experiences with the effect of nursing shortage at their institution.

Lastly, the researcher that was in charge of keeping the documents followed through the proper handling of data in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring the data of the participant is well protected. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 protects the fundamental human rights of privacy, and communication while ensuring the free flow of information to promote innovation and growth. This includes the rights of the data subject, the security of personal information, accountability, and ensuring that the researchers comply with the standards set by the National Privacy Commission, which penalize malicious and unauthorized disclosure, breach of information, improper disposal of personal information and documents, and unauthorized processing of personal and sensitive information. In case of a request for disposal of the created documents, the physical copies of the documents will be shredded, and any digital copies of the file were removed from the hard drive, the researcher's PC, laptops, or cloud servers.

Research Instruments

In this study, the researchers created an exploratory questionnaire that employed questions and required an answer based on how the nurses perceived the effects of the shortage of nurses at the particular hospital through the lens of their lived experiences. The instruments that was used by the researchers with the intention of gathering qualitative and relevant information that is related to the study are their preparation, questionnaires, pilot study, validation, and administration.

In preparation, the researchers conducted brainstorming and used their critical thinking skills by thoroughly analyzing their research topic. Furthermore, the researchers took the objectives of their study into consideration when preparing the questions for the interview. As a result, they came up with a list of questions that are related to the study, which helped them gather a relevant information.

For the questionnaires, the researchers created an exploratory questionnaire for the purposes of better understanding or the generation of hypotheses on a subject. The researchers also made sure that the questionnaire were based on the study's objectives as well as the problem statements. This also requires providing the most complete and accurate information possible, making it easy for participants to give the necessary information, keeping the interview brief and to the point, and arranging it so that the participants had remain interested throughout the interview. The questionnaire contains 10 questions that provided an accurate result for the researcher's conclusion and recommendation.

For the pilot interview, three people had taken part. The pilot study would aid in determining the efficacy of interviews for data collection for the study, as well as in reviewing the interview questions. The researchers also followed all of the steps for recruiting participants and collecting data that was laid out during the pilot study. Following the pilot study, the researchers made no changes to the original interview questions in order to collect relevant data using the planned interview questions. Furthermore, the pilot study provided an opportunity for the researchers to practice the interview activity prior to formal research interviews, as well as improved the efficiency of data recording. Moreover, the researchers kept all the data that was collected during the pilot study strictly confidential.

For the validation, the researchers relied on their

validators, the director of nursing service, assistant chief nursing officer, assistant chief nurse, (training and development), and the grammarian. Their supervision ensured the validity of the instruments that was used for the research. The recommendations were respectfully accepted for them to improve and ensured the accuracy of the research; the questions that was distributed were properly checked to avoid misleading information; and the interviewer was appropriately oriented about the proper way of gathering information from the participants.

Administration. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, including how this study can be helpful to their institution as they would receive social support from others, advancing their profession, and providing improved patient care.

On July 11, 2023, the questionnaire was the first day that the researchers distributed by obtaining consent through the hardcopy of letters that the researcher left at the hospital and the researchers' have reached the participants through the hardcopy of the informed consent formed that the participants have signed if they are willing to take part in the interview. The names and contacts that the researchers had reached out was given by the chief nurse. Lastly, the interview was conducted through online platforms or phone call; to whatever is convenient for the participants.

Data Collection

The collection of qualitative data allowed the researchers to examine how the shortage of nurses affect the healthcare institution and provide in-depth information through the collected non-numerical data that was used in proposing measures that mitigate the effect of the nursing shortage. Such conclusions were reached only after a thorough examination of the evidence, which should be comprehensive, rich, and nuanced.

Furthermore, the researchers initially measured the safety of the interview, which was conducted online and by phone call. For this reason, the researchers requested permission by delivering a letter of notice to the chief nurse; hence, after the chief nurse granted permission and approved the letter, the researchers waited for the participants who are willing to take part and they had given their contacts and names thru the ICF that the researchers left and also through their chief nurse. The interview was ensured by the hospital's chief nurse for the participant to take part in the interview if they like. Hence, the interview began when the participants were least busy. Along these

lines, the chief nurse notified the researchers that the interview of the participants takes inside the nursing office or ward quarters of their renowned hospital while the researchers conducted the interview via online platforms. It is done to avoid interfering and disrupting the researcher's target participant's duty and also for the administrator to check if the participant is included in the inclusion criteria of requirement material.

The study was conducted using constructed and validated instruments under the supervision of the research adviser. The adviser's approval was crucial in making this paper. A letter requesting the study's approval was distributed to the program head of the College of Nursing.

To complete this study, a review of the literature was carried out to locate relevant sources of data and information through journals, published papers, academic literature, and the use of the internet and web to identify a problem the researchers intend to address. Afterward, the related literature collected were defined and categorized by variables in accordance with the recommended goals. The set of questions that make up the questionnaire was essential in obtaining pertinent data that the participants may supply.

There were three researchers who managed the interview, with one facilitating the interview, one that talked and spoke the questions to the participant, and the other assisting with the voice recording. Before the interview, the participants were asked to move to a more convenient location to ease the surroundings and to speak freely and openly about the research topic and avoid the disruption of other nurses or patients in the hospital. However, prior to the interview, the participants were given a waiver consenting to the session being recorded for documentation purposes. The participants were also asked for audio recording as consent. The interview lasted approximately from 10 to 20 minutes, depending on their answer. Anytime, if the participants do not want to continue answering the question, they may refuse to answer. A pilot study was also done by the researchers to test the efficacy of the interviews and review the research questionnaires. It follows the same process of data collection as the formal interview. The pilot study serves as a practice for the researchers as well as a review for proper ethical efficacy for the interview. The data that was gathered from the pilot study were kept and recorded for the collection for the participant's confidentiality and the researcher's ethical integrity. The acquired information from the online or phone call interview was translated into transcription, which the researchers

had carefully examined and assessed. The analysis and interpretation of the data that was collected with regard to the nurses' experiences regarding the nursing shortage in the particular hospital enabled the researchers to draw inferences and themes from their findings.

Then, the authorized questionnaire was distributed to the intended audience, which consists of the full-time nurses employed at the hospital. Furthermore, with regards to the particular research locale- a private hospital—the questionnaire was given with the participants' consent first and underwent a one-on-one interview through online and phone call with the researchers to collect accurate information. The researchers chose the participants who are currently working as nurses with at least five years of experience. A semi-structured interview was conducted, and interviewers provided free or additional questions to explore significant replies. A set of similar questions was given to each participant related to the nursing shortage and their experiences as nurses in a working environment. The questions were open-ended to provide free, detailed, and broad answers that are expressive. The language that was used for the questionnaire was relevant and understandable for all the participants. All of the interviews were structured based on the study's problem statement, starting from their lived experiences with nursing shortages in terms: of pre-pandemic, pandemic, and new normal, their methods of handling nursing shortages, the observation of nurses between political, economic, and social solutions and the nursing shortage, the technological and environmental health care status of nurses with the nursing shortage, and proposing methods that will reduce the effects of the nursing shortage according to their themes that represent their experience and situation.

Along these lines, when the participants have answered, physical copies of the written answers were requested with permission from the facilitator. The researcher that was in charge of keeping the documents followed through on the proper handling of data in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring the participant's data is well protected. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 protects the fundamental human right of privacy, and communication while ensuring the free flow of information to promote innovation and growth. This includes the rights of the data subject, the security of personal information, accountability, and ensuring that the researchers would comply with the standards set by the National Privacy Commission, which

penalize malicious and unauthorized disclosure, breach of information, improper disposal of personal information and documents, and unauthorized processing of personal and sensitive information. In case of a request for disposal of the created documents, the physical copies of the documents were shredded, and any digital copies of the file were removed from the hard drive, the researcher's PC, laptops, or cloud servers.

Data Analysis

The data collected were interpreted using a series of bracketing and categorization techniques based on Colaizzi's strategy for phenomenological data analysis. According to Gumarang's study (Gumarang Jr., B. K., et al., 2021), Colaizzi's strategy for phenomenological data analysis is used for describing an individual's experiences and investigating these experiences based on a certain phenomenon through a series of sorting, organizing, analyzing, and presenting the data.

After the researchers done the collection of data from the participants, the researchers analyzed the participants' answers following the first stage of Colaizzi's strategy for phenomenological data analysis through series of transcribed statements from the participant recordings that took 4 to 12 hours, multiple review of said statements, and measured important statements. The participants were taken and given codenames to easily identify them together with their responses. Then, statements were then given "formulated meaning" by the researchers and then clustered the repeating answers into themes. Data separated to themes or meaning units were categorized in order to be interpreted. The themes taken was then reviewed by the researchers and validators, transformed as a point of view from the data, and conveyed as findings. The data themes or meaning units were given definitions and interpreted as the participant's perception or experience. Each of the themes and their sub theme were given an abstract expression signified by the responses of the participants based on the statement of the problem and number of questions. Lastly, the findings were verified through series of rechecked transcriptions, and garnered the participants feedback as to accurately their experiences from nursing shortages in order to rectify and modify the study's accuracy.

Results and Discussion

This discussed the data gathered in the study, which included an in-depth discussion of the lived

experiences of senior nurses with regard to the Nursing Shortage from the pre-pandemic, pandemic, and New Normal. The researchers presented the data from the interviews on the emergent themes to address the questions posed by the study. This was further supplemented by reading related studies to give readers and future researchers a wider range of viewpoints and perspectives on the lived experiences of senior nurses in the nursing shortage.

The senior nurses' experiences helped produce the topics presented below. The themes that emerged from the interview process illustrated the various phases experienced by the nurses within the research locale, from pre-pandemic to pandemic to the new normal. The themes of this study are drawn through a systematic method of rigorously reviewing the responses, ontologically coding the data, and grouping the recurring patterns of findings that are relevant to the lived experiences of the participants.

Thematic Representation

This study focused on the lived experiences of senior nurses with regard to the effects of the nursing shortage. The nurses' experiences were identified and understood by the researchers. Following the participant's and the researcher's interviews, the researchers conducted a thorough descriptive phenomenological analysis with such in-depth interviews as the core method of collecting information for a phenomenological study, with a selection of (3) individuals for pilot interview and (11) participants for the sample size of the study.

With prudent consideration of the veracity needed in the disclosure of the lived experiences of the participants under the nursing shortage phenomenon, the researchers opted to include an introductory background forecasting how they analytically considered all intervening factors and circumstances to capture the realistic scenario, as well as the ethical measures due to the noble pursuit of this study. On that note, hospital scenarios and personal perceptions are considered vital parts of the background. Therefore, researchers believed that phenomenology was the best approach to describing the experiences the wanted to elicit from the study.

What are the lived experiences of senior nurses in the current nursing shortage in terms: Pre-pandemic, Pandemic, and New Normal?

Theme 1. Resilience Unveiled: The Burdened Hearts, Risking Lives

This section covers the conscious thought, strategic problem-solving, and cognitive processes that are evident in the responses of the participants to which emerging themes are to be drawn.

Job stress can endanger the physical and mental health of nurses, decrease energy, and work efficiency, and fail to provide proper nursing care, which ultimately has a negative impact on patient outcomes. Therefore, it is required to investigate the stressors and effective planning to eliminate these factors (Babapour et. al., 2022). In the realm of selfless dedication and unyielding compassion, nurses emerge as unsung heroes, their resolute spirits carrying the weight of humanity's well-being. Behind their white coats lies a world fraught with burdens, risks, and unimaginable difficulties. This theme unravels the relentless struggles they face, showcasing the indomitable resilience that keeps them going.



Figure 1. *Against All Odds*

The figure shows a nursing student's emotion toward the burdens, risks, and difficulties that are being encountered by nurses in their profession.

Sub-Theme 1.1. *Work Overload: The Igniting Factor*

Sub-theme: Work Overload: The Igniting Factor	Verbatim Responses
	To question(s): How would you describe your work experience during the pre-pandemic, pandemic, and new normal? Participant # 4
	"Since ako 'yong ah Chief Nurse, pre-pandemic mayroon na siyang ano- scarcity ng nurses and ano malaki talaga 'yong kulang naming sa nurses, especially maraming patients."
	As the Chief nursing officer, I'm able to state that there was a shortage of nurses before the pandemic and we really were having a serious problem with our number of patients. Participant # 5
	"Several years, few years, pre-pandemic nakaka-expirince na kami ng shortage talaga. Oo, naka ano na kami.. naka 12 hrs shift na kami pre-pandemic pa lang. Kasi I think ayon 'yong time na nagstart yung K to 12 tapos na- na tapos 'yong production ng nurses kasi na stuck ng 2 years"
	We've had a shortage of nurses over several years before and during the Pandemic. We've been working 12 hour shifts, even pre-pandemic. That's also when the K12 program began, which had a negative effect on nursing graduate because they were two years later. Participant # 6
	"Yong ibang mga nurses namin na willing naman mag duty pero 'yong mga pamilya nila, ayaw na sila pag duty-hin."
	There's some nurses who are willing to do their work but the families don't want them doing it. Some didn't take the assignment because of their families. And there's bunch of nurses who haven't been able to communicate anymore.
	Participant # 8
	"Mas lalong nagkaron ng shortage of nurses since mas maraming nag open abroad kahit walang experience kinukuha ka nila. Mas toxic ang patients ngayon kasi mas kulang na kulang ang nurses. So ang patient namin ngayon ay 16 pero dalawa lang kaming nag ha-handle. 1:10 ang max dito."
	There has been a further shortage of nurses because they were seeking opportunities abroad even without experience, they are being accepted. Due to lack of nurses, the patients are now toxic. Usually, the ratio of nurse to patient should be 1:10 but we've got 16 patients in here right now and it's been handled by both of us. Participant # 9
	"Over time. Lalo kung puro bago 'yong nurses tapos iisa lang ang senior since hindi naman pwede iwan 'yong mga bago sa patient kasi need pa sila itrain talaga."
	We've been running an overtime, especially in the case of every new nurse and we can't leave them with patients because they need a proper training and supervisions with their senior nurses. Participant # 10
	"Siyempre need mo mag stay sa work, so sacrifice talaga. 'Di ka makakauwi."
	Obviously its sacrifice because you have to work as a call of duty and not able to get home that fast or easily. Participant # 11
	"...mas pinili nila mag stick sa family nila over work, so ginive up nila yung pagiging nurse nila."
	They've made up their minds to stay with their family and quit working as a nurse.

Regardless of the situational differences of the above timelines, the common denominator that is apparent in the responses of participant nurses in our hospitals is work overload. Burden, risk, and difficulty are the unfavorable consequences. This nursing shortage phenomenon led the participants to additional workload burdens like a greater nurse-to-patient ratio, longer hours of shifting and being burned out, among others, leading to an inevitable decline of quality healthcare services.

The consensus of the respondents was that the pandemic posed the greatest challenge among the three timelines because aside from work overload and work inconveniences brought by PPE, handling COVID patients may lead to their infection. Indeed, there is one among the respondents who got the virus upon performing her duty.

Sub-Theme 1.2. *Pandemic: A Life-Threatening Event For Nurses*

Sub-theme: Pandemic: A Life-Threatening Event for Nurses	Verbatim Responses
	To question(s): Along with the nursing shortage, which of the three presents the greatest challenge for you and why? Participant # 1
	"...marami nga talagang takot, hindi lang sa covid pero pati narin sa mga tao sa paligid- kasi takot sila na baka madapuan sila ng covid galing sa mga healthcare workers noon."
	...indeed, many people were afraid not only of COVID-19 itself but also of the people around them, especially the healthcare workers, fearing that they might get infected by the virus from them.
	Participant # 3
	"So, most of our nurses ayaw nang magreander ng service because of the fear of having the disease, the COVID-19."
	Our nurses either went abroad or just resigned because they had their fear of having infected by the disease.
	Participant # 4
	"Maraming nurse na nagresign dahil parang ah kase natakot na sila na pwede nilang makuha yung- COVID sa hospital, but ang truth is hindi mo makukuha yung COVID sa hospital makukuha mo ang COVID sa labas, kase sa hospital protective- ah protected ang mga staff kase nandidito yung mga PPE na tinatawag."
	A lot of nurses have resigned due to fear of getting infected by COVID 19 in the hospital but the truth is you can have it outside unlike in the hospital because of wearing PPE you are being protected from it.

Participant # 8

"So sa pagiging burned-out ko nagkasakit na ko ng diabetes since pagod ka hahanapin mo yung comfort food mo which is SWEETS like ice cream, chocolate siyempre pagod ka."

I ended up getting sick with diabetes because I am burnt out and exhausted at work. Sweets; Ice cream and chocolate specifically became my comfort food when I had this feeling of being relaxed and alive.

Participant # 9

"Ingat. Tsaka lang ililipat ang patinet pag cleaned na or negative RTPCR. Pero may mga patient pa rin na nag-positive."

To have a good service, we need to look after ourselves. During pandemic where patients are cleared or tested negative that's the time we transfer them into another room but if not they remain in our facility for treatment.

Participant # 10

"...syempre, pati mga staff nahahawa nang COVID din. So, struggle din sa familia nila, tulad ninyo."

The staff of course are also susceptible to the virus (COVID 19) and this is also our struggle and our family's.

Participant # 11

"Nung pandemic dun ko nakita na mas importante yung family over their work. Kasi syempre nung pandemic alam naman natin na COVID 19 masyadong dangerous na sakit."

We realized during the Pandemic, since we've seen how dangerous this illness (COVID-19) is, family matters more than work.

Figure 2. *Unbending Spirit*

Amidst Pandemic

The figure illustrates the unbending spirit of nurses in providing service to the public and their families.

Sub-Theme 2.1. *Disserting Heroes Amidst The Hopeless Situation*

How do senior nurses handle the nursing shortage?

Theme 2: **Uniting For Healing In The Face Of The Nursing Shortage**

The physical behaviors linked to intention and volition are included in this section. It also entails a transition from an internal to an observable externality. This explains how the participants were able to cope with the shortage of nurses in their respective hospital workplaces. The assumptions that underlie the recognition of medicine as a vocation rather than a career are more obvious in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthcare workers are under unprecedented global demand right now. Even though healthcare workers are celebrated as heroes, it is crucial to consider the boundaries of comfort, individual sacrifice, and how risk interacts with specific circumstances (Simons and Vaughan, 2020).

Amidst the challenging landscape of a nursing shortage, where resilience and dedication are put to the test, the human spirit shines through. The theme highlights the extraordinary experiences of healthcare professionals who courageously navigate through adversity, emphasizing the power of unity, compassion, and determination in overcoming the challenges posed by the shortage.

Verbatim Responses

To question(s): Can you tell what are the barriers that you've experienced during the peak of the nursing shortage in your hospital?

Participant # 1

"...merong mga younger na mga nurses na pinag-quit ng mga parents dahil nga takot din naman sila magka-covid. Yung iba, hindi nakakasama yung mga pamilya nila kasi nga ayaw nila mahawa ng covid..."

...there were younger nurses who were forced to quit their jobs by their parents due to their fear of contracting COVID-19. Some of them couldn't be with their families because they didn't want to risk infecting them with the virus.

Participant # 2

"...kailangan yung time at prioritization mo is well managed siya kasi kapag maraming pasyente tapos konti lang kayong mga nurses"

...you need to manage your time and prioritization well, especially when there are a lot of patients and only a few nurses available.

Participant # 3

"Kapag nandito ka na, kailangan mong maitawid 'yong duty mo. So ang mangyayari noon, 'yong quality of care talagang magdedecline, no. There are times na hindi mo maattend agad 'yong call sa iyo ng mga patients, so, ang sumusuport lang sa amin ang 'yong mga nursing aids."

Once your here, you have a responsibility to perform your work and take care of people no matter what. There has been times when you couldn't help them but instead the nurse assistance will be their back up.

Participant # 4

"So dahil dito sa shortage, yung continuous ba na pag resign ng staff kase mabilis yung pag alis nila sa ibang bansa. So ayon, barrier 'yon na hindi namin ma- continue yung aming training, dahil- may shortage na nga, umaalis pa. Even mung ano eh

Sub-theme:
*Disserting Heroes
Amidst the
Hopeless Situation*

Sub-Theme 2.2. Reciprocity: The Process Of Give And Take

	Verbatim Responses
	To question(s): In your years of working in the hospital how do you and your co-nurses cope with the shortage of nurses in your hospital? Participant # 1
<p>pandemic, nakakaalis din bigla eh, so yung may mga nurse na nakikipagsapalaran talaga kase malaki yung offer sa ibang bansa.”</p> <p>It affects us greatly because we cannot continue the trainings that is supposed to improved our skills due to lack of nurses and a continued exodus of staff to other high paying jobs abroad. Participant # 6</p> <p>“Sa shortage naman ng mga nurses -family matters, kase kung ano yung decision ng family kahit ano pilit nila minsan hindi naren sila tumutuloy.”</p> <p>Family matters play a significant role when it comes to the shortage of nurses. It is often the case that nurses families decide on their own regardless of how hard they try to convince them otherwise, sometimes choose not to enter a nursing career. This is because the priorities are different for those who are still single, and the concept of “family first” is usually not applied in the same way. Participant # 9</p> <p>“Over time. Lalo kung puro bago yung nurses tapos iisa lang ang senior since hindi naman pwede iwan yung mga bago sa patient kasi need pa sila itrain talaga.”</p> <p>We’ve been working overtime because of the shortage of nurses but as a senior nurses we have to train the new one and can’t leave our patients behind. Participant # 11</p> <p>“Syempre, pandemic. Pandemic ‘yon kasi walang kasiguruhan ‘yong work mo no’n eh.’ Yan ‘yong time na parang di na kami kumakain.”</p> <p>We are not secure in our work during a pandemic due to the circumstances of that time. Sometimes, because our obligations we don’t eat or skip meals. It is a scenario that we do not know what will befall us during the Pandemic.</p>	<p>“Kailangan mo humanap ng common ground between sa inyong mag kaka-trabaho para lahat kayo natututunan nyong mag-enjoy sa loob ng ospital kahit alam nyong kulang at pagod kayo.”</p> <p>You need to find a common ground among your colleagues to ensure that everyone learns to enjoy working together inside the hospital, even though you know you are understaffed and tired. Participant # 4</p> <p><i>Sub-theme: Reciprocity: The Process of Give and Take</i></p> <p>“Dumating yung time na even with the assistant chief nurse, chief nurse, and the supervisors tumutulong na sa floors, so nagduduty na rin para lang may makasama yung ibang mga nurses katulad nalang ng mga iba yung mga bago so sasamahan mo ‘yon or yung iba naman hindi dumating yung kapalita, so sasamahan mo ‘yon and then, ‘yun at kailangan mayroon kayong ano harmony- harmonious relationship.”</p> <p>There was a time even the Chief nurse, assistant chief nurse and supervising officer help us on the floor doing their duties in able to accompany the new one, that’s how we build harmonious relationship with in the team. Participant # 5</p> <p>“...kakausapin mo siya na [bawi nalang ako sayo sa susunod para maka-off ka para ako naman makapag relieve sayo].”</p> <p>You’ll be able to tell him or her, “I’m going to make it up to you next time so you can take a break and I’m cover you up”.</p>
	Participant # 8
	<p>“On-call tapos OT. Initiative ng co-nurses. For example sasabihin ng supervisor sayo, sigde duty ka ngayon tapos next day off ka or on-call ka ngayon.”</p> <p>Being in call and having an overtime are initiatives take by your co-nurses. The supervisors say, for example, “you’re supposed to be here today and then you’ll have a day off or you’ll be in duty the next day”.</p> <p>Participant # 9</p> <p>“Initiative ng co-nurses. Tutuhungan mo yung mga junior nurses since bago palang sila and hindi pwede iwan mag-isa so kawawa naman.”</p> <p>Its the initiative of co-nurses to help young nurses because they were new in the field or profession. We’re not leaving them incharge, they need our support. Participant # 10</p> <p>“...nagtutuhungan kami, siguro teamwork na lang din.”</p> <p>We’re helping one another, I think it’s just a team effort. Participant # 11</p> <p>“Decking kami ng schedule. So, ako yung magduduty for these days, tapos may isang magduduty nang ganitong day tapos -actually, di na kami umuuwi mung time na iyon kasi lockdown.”</p> <p>We were on a rotation schedule. Well, I’ve got a hot to do these days, and then the next day another nurse. In fact, that time we weren’t going home because of the lockdown.</p>

Since it was declared a world threat in 2019, COVID created great fear in the world population. The threat was even more intensified since it was also declared as airborne, In that, since to save one’s life has become a top priority during the pandemic, some nurses, out of fear of being infected by the virus, chose to leave their workplace and joined their families respectively at home.

In times of calamities, Filipinos always come to respond with values that are innately woven into the fabric of our society, the BAYANIHAN. This Filipino trait involves, mutual upbuilding, collaboration, sharing, bearing one another, comforting one another, encouraging each other’s self-esteem, and working together to reach a common goal. Give and Take is the modern version of *Bayanihan*. At the peak of the pandemic, this has become the shield of the respondents to stay foot and stand strong in the workplace.

What are the observations of senior nurses on the political, economic, and social solutions to the nursing shortage?

Theme 3. Addressing The Nursing Shortage: Building A Strong Healthcare Workforce For A Sustainable Future.

This section covers inter-subjectivity and intercorporeality or connecting with others both digitally and physically. This explains how the participants exercised their interpersonal skills with the people in their workplace in determining political, economic, and social solutions to the dearth of nurses in hospitals.

The government plays a crucial role in addressing the nursing shortage by establishing policies and regulations to ensure quality and safety in patient care, allocating funding for nursing education programs and scholarships, expanding the capacity of nursing schools, conducting workforce planning, implementing recruitment and retention strategies, developing immigration policies to facilitate the recruitment of foreign nurses when needed, fostering collaboration and partnerships, and supporting research initiatives to inform evidence-based decision-making.

As reiterated by the World Health Organization (2022), it is the responsibility of the government to achieve Sustainable Development Goals in their country by supporting health and well-being programs, and ensuring health services are well-funded and run by professionals who are well-trained. Through these efforts, the government aims to attract and retain a skilled nursing workforce, improve working conditions, and ensure the availability of quality healthcare services for the population.



Figure 3. Wake-Up Calls!

The figure shows a nursing student demonstrating a public protest on behalf of the nurses in the country who are receiving low income and recognition.

A news article released by dbm.gov.ph announced that

the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) approved on October 3, 2022, the release of a Special Allotment Release Order amounting to Php 1.02 billion to the Department of Health to cover the special risk allowance of eligible public and private health workers involved in COVID – 19 health care response. This and other allowances were served by the government as first aid treatments to the sturdily working healthcare personnel.

Sub-Theme 3.1. Life-Blood Transfusion For Nurses

Verbatim Responses	
Sub-theme: Life-Blood Transfusion for Nurses	To question(s): What are your observations on the economic and social solutions given by the government? Participant # 1 “...sabi nila tataasan pa nila at papa-gandahin nila yung healthcare system sa philippines”
	...they said they will further increase and improve the healthcare system in the Philippines. Participant # 2
	“...dapat maging competitive yung sweldo”
	...the salary should be competitive. Participant # 4
	“Only etong post-pandemic nagbibigay sila ng allowances ‘yun lang pero the rest hindi kami natutulungan ng government kase this is a private hospital.”
	They're only giving us allowances for the period after the pandemic but the government hasn't subsidised us because it's a private hospital. Participant # 5
	“Ang aware ako is nagbibigay ‘yong government ng allowances para sa mga healthcare workers and then ... I think yun lang kasi, yung iba kasi yung alam ko... before nung COVID frineeze nila yung hirings, yung paglabas nang mga nurses sa ibang bansa. Tapos... wala akong idea. Sa economic and social solutions, ah, sabi ni BBM, nabasa ko sa ano kanina... sa dyaryo “we will deliver”. Yung mga foreign, ano nya, foreign projects niya. Wala akong idea sa sobrang busy di na ko nakakanood ng news.”

I know that the government provides benefits to healthcare workers, I think so. Second, only I know the government has cancelled it's hiring and deployment of nurses abroad before the Pandemic broke out. I don't know much about economic and social solutions, I've just read a news article : BBM says, “ we will deliver”, its all about his foreign project. It's because I have so much work to do that I can't even look at the news.
Participant # 7

“Nagbigay lang sila ng COVID allowance atsaka yung sa HEYA pero ayun pa rin diba yung pimpush natin na tumaas yung sahod ng mga nurses. Hanggang ngayon, hindi sapat eh- grabe yung hirap ng mga trabaho ng health workers. Kaya mas maraming nag iibang bansa eh. Kase mas mataas yung ano nila- compare dito sa Pilipinas.”

They pay COVID-19 allowances but the nurses' salary increases are still not implemented which is a reason for them to go abroad since they earn more than here.

Sub-Theme 3.2. *Equal Compensation For One's Worth And Hardships*

Verbatim Responses	
To question(s): What recent political efforts do you think should be strengthened by an increased number of registered nurses to ensure employment for said nurses? Do you think these solutions are effective as such?	
Participant # 3	
"I think, one of the political efforts is 'yong ibalance nila, or, I align nila 'yong salary nang private nurses to public nurses kasi like us, hindi kami same ng salary ng public nurses..."	
I think one of the political efforts is to balance or align the salary of private nurses with that of public nurses because, like us, our salary is not the same as that of public nurses.	
Participant # 4	
"Ah siguro yung nurse-to-patient ratio", "...kase ang gusto namin is quality care. "And then, siguro yung ngayon is yung increase ng ano ng salary ng nurses"	
Perhaps the nurse-to-patient ratio is crucial because what we want is quality care, along with an increase in the salary of nurses.	
Participant # 6	
"Gusto namin uhm as public or private hospital magkaroon siya ng equality sa salary..." We want both public and private hospitals to have equality in terms of salary.	
Participant # 8	
"...kailangan nila itaas ang salary ng nurses since hindi naman aalis ang mga registered nurses kung sapat yung kinikita nila sa hospital."	
it is possible that a registered nurse will continue to work if her or his salary increases in the nursing profession, so long as she or he has enough income for family life.	
Participant # 9	
"Sana increased ang salary. If kung ano ang sa police and teachers since hawak sila ng government dapat ang nurses din."	
I hope the salary will be increased, just like what the police and teachers receive since they are also government employees. Nurses should be given the same consideration.	
Participant # 10	
"... deserve naman din natin na mag increase ang allowance, mga sahod natin"	
...we also deserve to have an increase in our allowances and salaries.	
Participant # 11	
"Pataasin, pataasin yung salary ng nurse, at tsaka bigyan priority yung healthcare delivery system natin kasi medyo deteriorated yung, ah, masyadong depleted yung healthcare delivery system dito sa Pilipinas. May lack tayo ng mga gamit na katulad nito, hindi masyadong napriority yung healthcare natin dito sa Pilipinas."	
They need to increase wages for nurses and prioritize out health care delivery system due to slight deterioration. In the Philippines, there is a lack of facilities and supplies that make it necessary to prioritise healthcare.	

What are the lived experiences of senior nurses regarding the current technological and environmental healthcare status of the shortage?

Theme 4. Technological Symphony: Empowering Healing Through Motivation.

This section includes knowledge of the modifications, improvements, additions, and abilities that a participant views as educative. This provides an understanding of how the participants figure out technological advancement and its role in the present setting. Globally, digital technologies have an increasing impact on nursing. Increasing reliance on telehealth and other virtual models of care, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, is one example. Others include the presence of artificial intelligence (AI) and robotic systems, the prevalence of mobile, internet, and social media, and the dependence of society on these technologies (Booth et al., 2021).

Technology brings a multitude of benefits to nurses, revolutionizing the way they provide care and enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness. From streamlined documentation to improved communication, technology empowers nurses in numerous ways. Mobile devices and nursing apps facilitate real-time communication, enabling rapid response and collaboration among healthcare teams. Medical imaging technology assists in accurate diagnosis and treatment planning, while remote monitoring systems provide real-time data on patient conditions, allowing nurses to intervene promptly. Automation of routine tasks frees up time for nurses to focus on direct patient care, enhancing both safety and quality of care. Overall, technology equips nurses with the tools they need to deliver timely, efficient, and patient-centered care, improving their workflow and contributing to better patient outcomes.



Figure 4. *Reimagining Nursing*

As Profession

The figure depicts a futuristic way of delivering healthcare services to the people.

Machines were invented for two main purposes; to make work easier and faster, and to improve product quality. These technological advancements in the respective hospitals of the participants brought a significant impact on their workload as shown in the appreciating mood conveyed from their responses.

In addition, Automation and digital systems streamline various administrative tasks, reducing manual documentation and paperwork. Electronic health records centralize patient information, enabling efficient retrieval and updating, eliminating the need for cumbersome paper records.

Sub-Theme 4.1. *Lighter Workloads Lift Heavy Burdens*

Verbatim Responses

To question(s): During the nursing shortage, have you noticed any technological advancements? If so, please identify and describe its efficiency in the healthcare setting based on your experience.

Participant # 1

"Meron tayong vaccination para sa mga nurses na for some, libre lang binibigay ng company."

We have vaccinations for nurses, and for some, the company provides them for free.

Participant # 2

"Infusion pump, malaking bagay yun kasi kahit kailangan monitored mo parin. Ang Infusion pump kasi unang una, for patient safety sya. Pangalawa, hindi siya time consuming. Kasi kapag naka-infusion pump, for example, kapag meron kang gamot na you should be giving in slow IV push for 30 minutes, pwede mo syang i-set kay infusion pump, at pwedeng iwan mo sya dun, tapos yung 30 minutes na yun pwede kang gumawa pa ng another task sa patient."

An infusion pump is a significant device because it needs to be monitored. Firstly, it ensures patient safety. Secondly, it saves time. For example, if you have a medication that needs to be given slowly through IV push for 30 minutes, you can set it on the infusion pump and leave it there. During those 30 minutes, you can attend to other tasks for the patient.

Participant # 3

"Noon hindi kami masyado nag infusion pump, so case to case lang 'yan if patient is in critical na case, doon lang kami gagamit ng infusion pump, but then, now, patients are now required to use infusion pump para mas regulated."

Sub-theme:
*Lighter workload:
lift heavy burdens*

Sub-Theme 4.2. Technology Advances Through And Through

Participant 10	Verbatim Responses
<p>“...may mga technologies sila ginagawa para maproduce ‘yong mga vaccines as much as possible na may... mai-deliver din sa mga patients na- para makaiwas ng- magkaroon ng COVID.”</p>	<p>To question(s): Other than in hospital settings, where do you think these advancements have been useful? Participant # 1</p>
<p>In order to be able to deliver the vaccine to patients and to help prevent COVID 19 infection, they use technology to produce the vaccine as much as possible. Participant # 11</p>	<p>“...nakakatulong sya sa healthcare setting kasi kahit sa labas (community) nangyayari itong mga qr code na to, cashless transactions, nakakatulong parin sya kasi kapag nagkasakit sila”</p>
<p>“...yung sinasabing home-based na parang magbibigay nang vaccinations, magRT-PCR. Actually, malaki siyang tulong sa healthcare setting kasi yung mga pasyente na may mga COVID or na nainfect nang COVID-19 virus.”</p> <p>...the concept of home-based services, like providing vaccinations and conducting RT-PCR tests, is indeed a significant help in the healthcare setting. It benefits patients who have COVID-19 or have been infected with the COVID-19 virus.</p>	<p>...it is helpful in the healthcare setting because even in the community, these QR codes and cashless transactions are implemented, which still prove beneficial when people get sick. Participant # 2</p> <p>“Sa community. Pwede rin siyang gamitin sa Community.”</p> <p>In Community. Technological Advancements can be used in community.</p> <p>Participant # 3</p> <p>“Before, isusubmit mo yung mga projects mo ng naka hardcopy, ngayon pwedeng softcopy.”</p>
<p>We haven't used an infusion pump that much before, as I recall. It is a case-by-case basis that it's used exclusively for critically ill patients. They have to use the infusion pumps more often these days in order to control them. Participant # 5</p> <p>“Ang ginawa namin dito dahil nga may shortage ng nurse ang management nag acquire ng madaming infusion pump. So lahat ng patient naming ngayon naka infusion pump para mashorten yung stay ni patient- ni nurse sa patient na nagreregulate ng IV, for patients' safety rin yun.”</p> <p>The administration bis acquiring a large number of infusion pumps due to the shortage of nurses. Consequently, were using infusion pumps for all of our patients to shorten the time spent by nurses with those who need IVs. This is in the interest of patient safety as well. Participant # 9</p> <p>“Online consulting services.”</p>	<p>Before, you used to submit your projects in hardcopy, but now, you can submit them in softcopy. Participant # 5</p> <p>“QR code, useful siya sa lahat. Katulad ng sa registration diba nang sa vaccination, QR code na. Uhm, ngayon sa mga restaurant's menu, QR code na din.”</p> <p>The QR code advancements was also useful in every aspect. Just like in registration, you just have to present your QR code even in the restaurants' menu. Participant # 7</p> <p>“Parang yung takot nila sa COVID nabawasan. Pero majority lang.”</p> <p>They feel more secure, and the fear of COVID has lessened for many people. Participant # 8</p> <p>“Sa clinic”</p> <p>In clinic Participant # 10</p> <p>“Actually, hindi lang siya sa hospitals, either sa mga barangays din, sa mga maraming tao rin nakatulong din ‘yong vaccines dahil na l lessen din ‘yong... ‘yong effect ng COVID</p> <p>Indeed, it's not just in hospitals, but also in barangays and among many people. Vaccines have been helpful in reducing the impact of COVID-19.</p>

Delivering a healthcare service of higher quality is the goal of every hospital. This goal has a great price. One of which is technological advancement. Machines and equipment that are more efficient cost more. But the efforts to advance development are worth it when safety, ease, and quality healthcare service make Philippine hospitals great.

Based on the above table, it can be inferred that these technological advancements are also useful in expediting the communication process, lessening stress by simplifying the courses of action in availing a service, and more.

Based on the themes, what proposed methods will reduce the effects of the nursing shortage?

Theme 5. Strengthening Nurses' Protection Advocacies And Education

There is a critical need for nurses' protection advocacies and education to ensure their safety, well-being, and professional development. Nurses face occupational hazards, including physical injuries, infectious diseases, workplace violence, and mental health challenges. Advocacies focused on nurses'

Sub-Theme 5.1. Building Unbreakable Fortress Through Mutualism

protection raise awareness about these risks and work towards implementing policies and regulations that prioritize nurse safety. Education equips nurses with the knowledge and skills to identify and mitigate risks, promotes self-advocacy, and provides resources for maintaining mental well-being. By supporting nurses through protection advocacies and education, healthcare organizations can create safer work environments, improve job satisfaction, reduce turnover rates, and ultimately enhance patient outcomes.



Figure 5. *It's Now or Never!*

The figure illustrates an urgent scenario that the government should take action to this problem relating to nurse shortage before it is too late.

Give and take seems to be the magic phrase that keeps the group of nurses powerfully functional amidst the nursing shortage phenomenon. The reciprocating effects of mutual upbuilding, collaboration, sharing, bearing one another, comforting one another, encouraging each other's self-esteem, and working together to perform duties and functions strengthened their ties and nurtures their professional growth. With give and take, not only works were carried out but also friendship developed along with a healthy working environment propagated.

Verbatim Responses

To question(s): As a senior nurse, what approaches do you suggest to minimize the effects of nursing shortage in your hospital?

Participant # 1

"Bukod sa proper compensation, kailangan rin mas maging makatao ng company-- meaning, kapag may concern, pakinggan both sides... pakinggan yung sides ng nurses, pakinggan yung sides ng pasyente, at pakinggan ang sides ng doctors."

Aside from proper compensation, the company also needs to be more humane, meaning they should listen to both sides when there are concerns. They should hear the nurses' perspectives, the patients' perspectives, and the doctors' perspectives.

Participant # 2

"Ngayon meron kaming referral incentives, at the same time mayroong signing bonus 'yon."

As of now, we have a referral incentive, at the same time, we also have a signing bonus.

Participant # 3

"Ang strategy namin is to train them muna, give them all their needs, no, evaluate them if kaya na nila sa ward. Then, gradual 'yong pagbibigay namin ng patients, like before kasi samin nung pumasok ako dito I handled about 8 patients, so ngayon sila, isa muna, dalawa, hangang sa kaya mona yung tatlo."

The strategic way that we've been doing about it is to train them, give them all their needs and evaluate if they can deal with patients in the ward. As I recall, I've been treating eight patients since I started here, but we gradually assign patients to them one at a time until they've handle more.

Participant # 5

"... ang ginagawa nalang namin ngayon is strengthening the training program para sa mga bagong nurses para diba ang common fear kasi ng mga nurse hindi nila alam yung ginagawa..."

As of this time, they're implementing intensive training for new nurses to enhance their ability to manage patients, due to the common apprehension that there are situations where a new nurse does not know what to do.

Participant # 7

"... yung management kung maganda yung pag aalaga nila sa staff nila- kahit mababa ang sahod, hindi man kababaaan ang sahod, magtatagal ang mga staff nurse."

Nurse or staff are automatically kept in an organisation as loyal employees if the management is good at treating them.

Participant # 9

"Huwag sasagarin kapag pagod ka, pagod ka. Hindi pipilitin papasukin kapag hindi okay. Para maging okay yung quality of care na maibibigay mo sa patient."

Don't overdo it. Take a break because it's better to provide excellent service to the patient if you're okay.

Participant #11

"Siguro ipromote ang work life balance."

Maybe we'd better promote a balance between work and life.

Sub-Theme 5.2. Right Education Comes Right Advocacy

Verbatim Responses	
To question(s): What would you or the public do to help and advocate for both private and public nurses?	
Sub-theme: Right Education comes Right Advocacy	Participant # 1
	"Kailangan lang malaman at maintindihan ng mga tao na hindi madali ang mga ginagawa ng mga nurse. Kasi ang tingin nila ngayon BPO nalang ang mga nurses kasi mas okay yung bayad, pero hindi nila alam na ang nursing is not just a profession pero calling rin kasi sya."
	People need to know and understand that the work of nurses is not easy. Some may perceive nursing as just another job, similar to BPO work, because of the better pay. However, they may not realize that nursing is not only a profession but also a calling.
	Participant # 2
	"Dapat 'yong mga patient or yung public is educated na hindi siya (nursing) ganoon kabilis na i-attend sila. Siguro, proper education nalang sa mga public."
	The patient must be educated that the nurses are not fast-carer for them. Perhaps, through proper education.
	Participant # 4
	"Kailangan ng ano- nang visibility ng nurse, so kailangan hindi lang makita si nurse as nurse "LANG" but a "NURSE", hindi sya under ng doctor but part or team. Kasi ang lagging sinasabi is nurses lang yan or kaya alalay lang ng doctor. No. We want to see nurses or na mag exist siya as a professional na mataas yung estado sa lipunan".
	Nurse's visibility must be ensured if we are not to see them as mere nurses but professionals with respect for their
	responsibility with the community. We want to see nurses as professionals not just an assistant of other healthcare professionals.
	Participant # 7
	"Magagampanan ang trabaho niya pero yung satisfaction niya as a nurse, hindi na."
	The public must be aware of this. They're doing their jobs but they don't seem to be satisfied with being a nurse.
	Participant # 8
	"Sa mga bagong nurses, sana maging aware sila sa profession nila na huwag sanang gigive-up agad."
	To the new nurses out there. I hope they are aware of their profession and not to give up that easily.
	Participant # 9
	"... sa mga bagong nurses na we hope na aware sila or matatag loob nila for example pag pinagalitan, huwag agad susuko or iiyak."
	The new nurses should be extremely focused and aware of what they are to do, not give up or cry out when somebody reprimand them.
	Participant # 10
	"Magkaroon nang more experience siguro and then mga trainings din para well prepared din yung papasok sa-yung health worker sa hospitals or health facilities."
	I'm thinking of having more experiences and attending a training course so that when they come to the hospital or are hired they have better preparation for being a healthcare worker.

If any good or benefit is to be given to nurses, it should be given to all with no discrimination whether public or private hospital nurses. This is the prevailing spirit of the participants' responses to this study. Harmoniously, as they strive for work-life balance, equality has become an essential part of the process. And this advocacy is not a noble intellectual idea, it is

a principle molded by their respective work experiences, professional growth, and personal maturity.

The individual responses of the respondents were systematically and purposefully regrouped to come up with themes putting in words a clear picture of their lived experiences as nurses who worked amidst nursing shortage, the emerging general theme that would sum up the totality of their experiences and perceptions is DILIGENCE.

For nurses, pre-pandemic was already a phenomenon. The workload was already more than typical as the shortage was already experienced. More challenges came as a surprise during the pandemic, and even in the new normal until today. But diligence remained the prevailing weapon of the respondents to surpass all challenges. Their GIVE AND TAKE was a by-product of diligence. Their resilience was a result of diligence. Even their advocacies for equal benefits and higher salaries are the results of their diligent experiences in the field.

The lived experiences of the nurses proved Charles Darwin's Survival of the Fittest which claimed that the organisms that survive in an existing environmental condition are those that can be able to adapt to the environment. Our nurse respondents survived and the key factor for their triumph is diligence.

Conclusion

For the conclusion, the researchers summarized the important findings of the interviews of the participants providing careful analysis and evaluation that leads to the formation of themes and its sub-themes. For the participants, the topic was best suited for the respondents as it provides insight for future nurses and provides advocacy for the concerns for their findings. The participants were chosen as they have direct experience in said working environment and have said experience with the researchers' same concerns with nursing shortages pre-pandemic, during pandemic and new normal.

Based on the answers of the respondents, the researchers have concluded that, first, most of the nurse's experience to burden, risk, and difficulty such as a greater nurse-to-patient ratio, longer hours of shifting and being burned out, among others, leading to an inevitable decline of quality healthcare services

in response to overload from nursing shortages. This burden poses risk to the nurses at the working environment as one of the risks they encounter is being infected while performing duties as one of the challenging tasks during the pandemic. Out of fear, nurses choose to leave their workplace and join their families respectively at home afraid of ever being infected or infecting them. At their workplace, nurses would encourage mutual upbuilding, following the Filipino trait of BAYANIHAN, making the nurses stand strong amidst the shortage and promote good working environment in pandemic as before pandemic a practice of give-and-take were used to combat nursing hours and shortage in accordance to their mutual understanding this builds up the strong workforce between each nurses for a sustainable future. With the support of technology improvements, the nurses found comfort and drive to complete their task during their workload. With technology such as electronic health records and digital systems reducing the amount of paperwork, and technical improvements such as infusion pumps proving to reduce respondents' burdens by making work easier and faster, as well as improving product quality, it demonstrated to reduce participants' burdens.

The nurses in the midst of pandemic have received compensations such as the special risk allowance from the Department of Health and some help from LGUs as first aid treatments to the sturdily working healthcare personnel. However, salary was still the demand of the majority of the respondent as the equal pay between institute, public and private, was needed as increase in salary remains a recognition and compensation to said work of health workers to said risks, physical, emotional, and intellectual demands of a job which promotes individual maturity. The researchers also concluded that, not just compensation pay but the nurses also demand protection especially from their hospital, a good communication between them to build up a high quality care and good environment. The nurses also wanted to raise their advocacies for their junior nurses that need more education about the field, because they considered them as one of the more valuable in their workplace. These are responses that were hoped to be acknowledged by policymakers for future enhancement for quality of life for working nurses.

With the results of this study, the following recommendations were made:

For the university, they should provide effective instructors that would help in enhancing the skills and knowledge of the students.

For hospitals, both public and private hospitals should invest and gather more modern technologies that can reduce the workload of the nurses. They should also decrease the time of shifts and nurse-patient ratio, and increase nurses employment by offering a fair compensation and benefits.

For the government, the higher ups should enhance new policies and come up with a plan that will prioritize the practice of medicine and find alternative solutions about the demand of increased salary for the nurses and provide equal recognition between public and private hospitals.

For Registered Nurses, new nurses and also senior nurses should learn how to express their concerns. Registered nurses should also be nice and understanding to the other nurses. In addition to that, senior nurses should also motivate, guide, and teach the new nurses more knowledge and skills.

For the future researchers, they may used this study as basis and expand its findings by comparing the results to the other hospitals or medical institutes. The researchers also suggested to increase the population size or the number of participants to gather more accurate datas.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Dr. Joel John A. Dela Merced

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

Joseph E. De Luna

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

Juliana Gabrielle O. Garcia

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

Czarina Garrido, MAN, CNN, RN

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

Marc Edison O. Malana

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

Shaira Ann C. Manguerra

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

Jerimae E. Rabago

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

Katryz Zamea G. Usman

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

Ruby D. Vargas, PhD, MAN, RN

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

James Darren H. Villalva

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines

Elsie V. Villanueva, MAN, RN

Our Lady of Fatima University – Philippines